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Great Places plans detailed

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CLINTON — Specifics on potential improvements to be made to Clinton's riverfront and other areas if the city is selected to receive funding through Gov. Vilsack's Iowa Great Places initiative were presented at Tuesday's Clinton City Council committee of the whole meeting.

Representatives of the ad hoc committee that has been meeting since April to develop a Great Places proposal, including Dan Blohm, Greg Farwell and Carissa Evans, each provided details on what the committee has determined to be the most desirable additions to the city.

The committee surveyed more than 50 members of the community to get input on what makes Clinton a great place and how best to augment these areas. The information gathered was used to form numerous recommendations for the letter of interest which will be submitted to the state later this week.

The basis of the proposal is tying together and building on the positive features of the community, with the central theme being the riverfront area.

The plans include:

Eagle Point Park

- Expand the park area by optioning and or/repurposing city-owned space adjacent to the current park.

- Add walking and hiking trails.

- Reopen nature center and zoo.

- Implement current plan for bike path extension north to Jackson County line.

- Renovate the 1,000 Steps river access.

- Renovate Works Progress Administration era structures including the lookout, add a

lookout tower with a light feature.

- Add recreational vehicle and camping areas and shelters.

- Add/renovate play structures with inclusion of a water feature.

- Add Frisbee golf course.

North River — Lyons Main Avenue Junction

(The properties extending along the riverfront from the 19th Avenue North Bridge to the former McEleney dealership)

- Potential home of Clinton Heritage Center (the proposed Sawmill Museum).

- Work with current owners of riverfront property to convert land to public ownership on mutually acceptable terms.

- Install reverse gate to allow Mississippi waters to flow on Heritage Center grounds.

- Construction of trolley depot for access to Eagle Point Park.

- Explore ideas for a "Lumberland" attraction with rides and entertainment.

- Extension of North River Drive to Main Avenue, Lyons.

Willow Island/Joyce's Slough

- Add a public beach in the Willow Island Harbor area including construction of bathhouse and concession structures, which will require electrical, water and sewer access.

- Enhanced marina facilities in Joyce's Slough, in accordance with current Army Corps of Engineers study of silting in the slough.

- North River Drive access through the area.

- Add parking south of North Bridge. Suggest parking prohibition on the drive. Beach pick-up and drop-off in the boat ramp and flood gate will require some improvements in that area.

Scrapyard located behind

Armstrong Building

- Work with current owner to convert land to public ownership under mutually acceptable terms.

- Environmental Protection Agency assessment and cleanup.

- Plan and implement future use, for example a picnic area or sculpture garden.

Citywide Initiatives

- The city should establish a plan and offer incentives for all light industrial and non-retail business occupying riverfront property to relocate within a 5 to 10 year time frame, so as to release that land for public spaces.

- Work with the Department of Transportation for a waiver to allow welcome arches over the Iowa side of each bridge.

- Work to have downtown Clinton and the Lyons Historic District certified as Cultural and Entertainment Districts.

- Establish community art grants for public art and murals.

- Incorporate a unifying theme to street markings, barriers and fences, for example the waves on Lincoln Way overpass.

While only three cities in the state will be selected to receive Great Places funding, Blohm pointed out that Clinton has many unique features that must be emphasized. The city is the closest point in Iowa to Chicago's tourism dollars, has one of the largest city-owned parks in the state, which includes a premier spot for viewing the Upper Mississippi River at its widest point and has a longer riverfront than almost any city in the state, a large percentage of which is publically-owned.

"We have as good a chance as anyone," said Ward 4 Councilman Rodger Holm, who attended a Great Places forum in



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Dubuque.

The council members welcomed the committee's suggestions for improvements and thanked them for their efforts. The council will vote on a resolution to endorse the proposal at its next meeting.

"Dreams are the place where you start, and if you dream enough, it makes you work harder so that you eventually accomplish something," said at-large council member Bob Soesbe. "I think this would just be great for Clinton."

